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LA CHASSE GALERIE and other CANADIAN STORIES

by

H. BEAUGRAND

MONTREAL
1900

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Canot d'écorce qui vole !

The following story was published in French in *La Patrie*, some years ago, and in English in the *Century Magazine* of New York, in August, 1892, with illustrations by Henri Julien.

The narrative is founded on a popular superstition dated back to the days of the *coureurs des bois*, under the French regime, and perpetuated among the *voyageurs* in the Canadian Northwest. The shantymen of a later date have taken up the tradition, and it is in the French settlements, bordering the St. Lawrence River, that the legends of *la chasse-galerie* are specially well known at the present time. The writer has met many an old *voyageur* who affirmed most positively that he had seen bark canoes traveling in mid-air, full of men paddling and singing away, under the protection of Beelzebub, on their way from the timber camps of the Ottawa to pay a flying visit to their sweethearts at home.

It is hardly necessary to apologize for having used in the narrative expressions typical of the rude life and character of the men whose language and superstition it is the intention of the writer to portray. H. B.

LA CHASSE-GALERIE

WELL, then, since you seem to desire it so very much, I will tell you a roarin' story that ought to be a lesson to all of you. If there is among the crowd any renegade who intends to run *la chasse-galerie* or the *loup-garou*, he had better skip and go outside to see whether the owls are screeching in the storm, in converse with Old Nick himself, because I intend to begin

my story by making a big sign of the cross. That will be a regular set-back to *le diable*, who always tries, at this time, to snatch a poor shantyman's soul by promising him all kinds of nonsense. I have had enough of that in my young days to understand his tricks. . . .

Not a man moved. On the contrary, all gathered closer round the fireplace, where the cook had dragged the provision-chest, and upon which he had taken his seat on a camp-stool, preparatory to relating his experience under the wiles of the *mauvais esprit*. . . .

It was on New Year's eve of the year 1858, in the depth of the forest, in the Ross timber camp, at the head of the Gatineau River. The winter had fairly set in, and the snow outside had already piled up to the roof of the shanty. The boss, according to custom, had ordered the distribution of the contents of a small barrel of Jamaica rum among the men, and the cook had terminated early his preparations of a succulent *ragout* of pig's feet and of a large tin full of *glissantes* for the New Year's dinner.

A big kettle, half full of molasses, was already simmering on the fire, as there was to be a candy-pull to finish the evening's entertainment.

Every man had filled his pipe with good strong Canadian tobacco, and a thick cloud of smoke darkened the interior of the shanty. A few pine-branches thrown at intervals on the fire produced a reddish glare that illuminated the rude faces of the men with curious effects of *clair-obscur*.

Joe, the cook, was a homely little man who laughed at his own physical defects, and who did not take offense when his comrades chaffed him on the subject, and called him *le bossu*, the hunchback. He had worked in the shanties for the last forty years and his experience was only equaled by the facility with which he could relate his adventures when he had taken a glass of *bonne vieille Jamaique*.

"I was telling you," said Joe, "that I was a *pendard* in my youth, but it is long since I mended my ways, and now I never joke about religious matters. I go to confession regularly every year, and what I am

about to relate took place years and years ago, when I feared *ni Dieu, ni diable*. It was on a night like this, a New Year's eve, thirty-four or thirty-five years ago. Gathered round the fireplace with all the *camarades*, we made merry; and if it is true, as we say in French, that 'small rivulets make large rivers,' it is just as true that small drinks empty large barrels. And in those days, people drank more than to-day, and evenings of this kind generally ended in a boxing-match, outside, in the snow. The *rhum* was no better than it is to-night, but it was *bougrement bon*, I can assure you. I will be frank with you and tell you that about eleven o'clock my head began to feel dizzy, and I lay down on my buffalo-robe to take a nap, while waiting for the midnight jump that we always take over the head of a pork-barrel, from the old year into the new one. We will repeat the same thing to-night before we go to visit the neighboring camps to wish them the compliments of the season.

"I had slept for quite a while, when I was rudely awakened by a second boss, Baptiste Durand, who said to me: Joe, it is past midnight, and you are late for the barrel-jump. The *camarades* have gone to the other camps, and I am going to Lavaltrie to see my sweetheart. Will you come with me?" ❧ ❧ ❧

"'To Lavaltrie,' said I, 'are you crazy? We are three hundred miles away from there, and you could not travel the distance in two months, through the forest, when there are no roads beaten in the snow. And what about our work the day after tomorrow?' ❧ ❧ ❧

"'*Imbecile!* don't you understand me? We will travel in our bark canoe, and tomorrow morning at six o'clock we will be back here for breakfast.' ❧ ❧ ❧

"I understood. Baptiste Durand proposed that I should join him and run *la chasse-galerie*; risk the salvation of my soul for the fun of going to give a New Year's kiss to my *blonde* at Lavaltrie. That was a little

too much for me. It was true that I was a *mauvais sujet*, that I did not practise *la religion*, and that I took a drink too much now and then; but between that and the fact of selling my soul to *le diable* there was a big difference, and I said: 'No, siree! *Pas un tonnerre!*' ❧ ❧ ❧

"'Oh, you are a regular old woman,' answered Baptiste tauntingly. 'There is no danger whatever. We can go to Lavaltrie and back in six hours. Don't you know that with *la chasse-galerie* we can travel 150 miles an hour, when one can handle the paddles as well as we all do. All there is to it is that we must not pronounce *le nom du bon Dieu* during the voyage, and that we must be careful not to touch the crosses on the steeples when we travel. That's easy enough, and, to be all right, all a man has to do is to look where he goes, think about what he says, and not touch a drop of liquor on the way. I have made the trip five times, and *le diable* has not got me yet. Come, *mon vieux*, stiffen up your courage, and in two hours we will be at Lavaltrie. Think of Liza Guimbette,

and the pleasure you will have in kissing her "a happy New Year." There are already seven of us to make the trip, but we must be two, four, six, or eight, to make up the crew of the canoe.' ❧ ❧ ❧

"'Yes, that's all right, but you must make an engagement with *le diable*, and he is not the kind of a *bourgeois* that I want to make any bargain with.' ❧ ❧ ❧

"A simple formality if we are careful where we go and not to drink. ❧ A man is not a child, *pardieu!* Come on! The *camarades* are waiting outside, and the canoe is already in the clearing. ❧ Come, come!'

"And I was led outside of the shanty, where I saw the six men who were awaiting us, paddle in hand. ❧ The large canoe was lying on a snowbank, and before I had time to think twice about it, I was seated in the bow, awaiting the signal to go. ❧ I must say that my mind was somewhat confused, but Baptiste Durand, who was a hard customer,—for, it was said, he had not been to confession for seven years,—gave me no time for reflection. ❧ He was

standing in the stern, and exclaimed in a ringing voice : ❧ ❧ ❧

"'Are you ready ?' ❧ ❧ ❧

"'Ready.' ❧ ❧ ❧

"'Repeat after me.' ❧ ❧ ❧

"'And we repeated together : ❧ ❧ ❧

"'*Satan !* king of the infernal regions, we promise to sell you our souls, if within the following six hours we pronounce *le nom du bon Dieu*, your master and ours, or if we touch a cross on the voyage. On that condition you will transport us through the air, wherever we may want to go, and bring us back sound and safe to the shanty. *Acabris, Acabras, Acabram ! Fais-nous voyager par-dessus les montagnes !*' ❧ ❧

III

"The last words were hardly pronounced, when we felt the canoe rising in the air to a height of five or six hundred feet. ❧ I felt as light as a feather, and at Baptiste's command, we commenced paddling like sorcerers that we were. ❧ At the first stroke of the paddle, the canoe shot out like an arrow, and off we went under the protecting wing

of *le diable* himself. It fairly took my breath away, and I could hear the bow of the canoe whizzing through the crisp air of the night.

"We went faster than the wind, and during the first fifteen minutes we sailed over the forest, without perceiving anything else than the dark heads of the great pines. It was a beautiful night, and a full moon lighted up the sky like the midday sun. It was terribly cold though, and our mustaches were fairly frozen, while our bodies were all in a perspiration. We were paddling like demons at work in the lower regions. We soon perceived a bright, glistening belt of clear ice, that shone like a mirror. That was the Gatineau River; and then the lights in the farm-houses, which were mostly lit up on New Year's eve. We began passing the tin-covered steeples as quickly as telegraph-poles fly past in a railway-train, and the spires shone in the air like the bayonets of the soldiers drilling on the Champ de Mars, in Montreal. On we went like *tous les diables*, passing over forests, rivers, towns, villages, and leaving behind

us a trail of sparks. It was Baptiste Durand, the *possede*, who steered the canoe because he knew the route, and we soon came to the Ottawa River, which we followed down to the *Lac des Deux Montagnes!* ❧ ❧ ❧

"'Look out there! said Baptiste; 'we will just skim over Montreal and frighten some of the fellows who may be out at this hour of the night.' Joe, clear your whistle and get ready to sing your best canoe-song, "*Canot d'ecorce,*" my boy.' ❧ ❧ ❧

"The excitement of the trip had braced me up, and I was ready for anything. Already we could see the lights of the great city, and with an adroit stroke of his paddle, Baptiste brought us down on a level with the summit of the towers of Notre-Dame. I cleared my throat and sang '*Canot d'ecorce.*' while my *camarades* joined heartily in the chorus. ❧ ❧ ❧

"'Mon père n'avait fille que moi,
Canot d'écorce qui va voler,
Et dessus la mer il m'envoie :
Canot d'écorce qui vole, qui vole,
Canot d'écorce qui va voler!'

Et dessus la mer il m'envoie,
  Canot d'écorce qui va voler,
Le marinier qui me menait:
  Canot d'écorce qui vole, qui vole,
  Canot d'écorce qui va voler!

Le marinier qui me menait,
  Canot d'écorce qui va voler,
Me dit ma belle embrassez-moi:
  Canot d'écorce qui vole, qui vole,
  Canot d'écorce qui va voler!

Me dit ma belle embrassez-moi,
  Canot d'écorce qui va voler,
Non, non, monsieur, je ne saurais:
  Canot d'écorce qui vole, qui vole,
  Canot d'écorce qui va voler!

Non, non, monsieur, je ne saurais,
  Canot d'écorce qui va voler,
Car si mon papa le savait:
  Canot d'écorce qui vole, qui vole,
  Canot d'écorce qui va voler!

Car si mon papa le savait,
  Canot d'écorce qui va voler,
Ah! c'est bien sur qu'il me battrait:
  Canot d'écorce qui vole, qui vole,
  Canot d'écorce qui va voler!

IV

"Although it was well on toward two o'clock in the morning, we saw some groups of men who stopped in the middle of the street to watch us go by, but we went so fast that in a twinkle we had passed Montreal and its suburbs. We were nearing the end of our voyage, and we commenced counting the steeples, Longue-Pointe, Pointe-aux-Trembles, Repentigny, St. Sulpice, and at last we saw the two shining spires of Lavaltrie that gleamed among the dark-green pines of the domain.

"'Look out over there' shouted Baptiste. 'We will land on the edge of the wood, in the field of my godfather, Jean-Jean-Gabriel. From there we will proceed on foot to go and surprise our acquaintances in some *fricot* or dance in the neighborhood.'

"We did as directed, and five minutes later our canoe lay in a snowbank, at the edge of the wood of Jean-Jean-Gabriel. We started in Indian file to go to the village. It was no small job, because the snow reached to our waists and there was no trace of any kind

of a road. Baptiste, who was the most daring of the crowd, went and knocked at the door of his godfather's house, where we could see a light, but there was no one there except a servant, who told us that the old folks had gone to a *snaque* at old man Robillard's place, and that the young people of the village—boys and girls—were across the St. Lawrence at Batissette Augé's, at the *Petite Misere*, below Contrecoeur, where there was a New Year's hop. . . .

"'Let us go to the dance at Batissette Augé's,' said Baptiste; 'we are sure to find our sweethearts over there. . . .

"'Let us go to Batissette Augé's!' . . .

"And we returned to our canoe, while cautioning one another against the great danger that there was . in pronouncing certain words, in touching anything in the shape of a cross, and especially in drinking liquor of any kind. We had only four hours before us, and we must return to the shanty before six o'clock in the morning, if we wanted to escape from the clutches of Old Nick, with whom we had made such a desperate bar-

gain. And we all knew that he was not the kind of a customer to let us off, in the event of any delay on our part. . .

"'*Acabris, Acabras, Acabram! Fais-nous voyager par-dessus les montagnes!*' shouted Baptiste once more. . .

"And off we went again, paddling through the air, like renegades that we were, every one of us. We crossed the river in less time than it requires to tell it, and we descended in a snowbank close to Batissette Augé's house, where we could hear the laughter of the dancers, and see their shadows through the bright windows. . .

"We dragged our canoe on the riverside, to hide it among the hummocks produced by the ice-shove. . .

"'Now,' said Baptiste, in a last warning, 'no nonsense! Do you hear? Dance as much as you can, but not a single glass of rum or whisky. And at the first sign, follow me out without attracting attention. We can't be too careful!' . .

"And we went and knocked at the door.

The Dance at Batissette Augé's

"Old Batissette came and opened the door himself, and we were received with opened arms by the guests, who knew us all.

"'Where do you come from?'

"'I thought you were in the *chantiers,* up the Gatineau?'

"'What makes you come so late?'

"'Come and take a smile.'

"Baptiste came to the rescue by saying: 'First and foremost, let us take our coats off, and give us a chance to dance. That's what we came here for, and if you still feel curious in the morning, I will answer all your questions.'

"For my part, I had already spied Liza Guimbette, who was chatting away with little Boisjoli, of Lanoraie. I made my *reverence* in due style, and at once asked for the favor of the next dance, which was a four-handed reel. She accepted with a smile that made me forget that I had risked the salvation of my soul to have the pleasure of pressing her soft white hand in mine and of

cutting pigeonwings as her partner. During two hours the dancing went on without stopping, and, if I do say so myself, we shanty fellows cut a shine in the dance that made the hayseeds tired before morning. I was so busy with my partner that at first I did not notice that Baptiste was visiting the *buffet* rather often with some of the other boys, and once I caught him lifting his elbow in rather a suspicious manner. But I had no idea that the fellow would get tipsy, after all the lecturing he had given us on the road. When four o'clock struck, all the members of our crew began to edge out of the house without attracting attention, but I had to drag Baptiste before he would consent to go. At last we were all out, with just two hours before us to reach the camp, and three hundred miles to ride in our canoe, under the protection of Beelzebub. We had left the dance like wild Indians without saying good-bye to anybody, not even to Liza Guimbette, whom I had invited for the next *cotillon*. I always thought that she bore me a grudge for that, because

when I reached home the next summer she was Madame Boisjoli.

"We found our canoe all right in the hummocks, but I need hardly tell you that we were all put out when we found that Baptiste Durand had been drinking. He was to steer the boat, and we had no time to lose in humoring the fancies of a drunken man. The moon was not quite so bright as when we started from the camp, and it was not without misgivings that I took my place in the bow of the canoe, well decided to keep a sharp lookout ahead for accidents. Before starting I said to Baptiste:

"'Look out, Baptiste, old fellow! Steer straight for the mountain of Montreal, as soon as you can get a glimpse of it.'

"'I know my business,' answered Baptiste sharply, 'and you had better mind yours.'

"What could I do? And before I had time for further reflections:

"'*Acabris, Acabras, Acabram! Fais-nous voyager par-dessus les montagnes!*'

VI

"And up we went again like lightning, steering southwest, if the wild way in which Baptiste managed our boat could be called steering. We passed over the steeple of the church of Contrecoeur, coming pretty close to it, but instead of going west Baptiste made us take a sheer toward the Richelieu River. A few minutes later we were skimming over Beloeil Mountain, and we came within ten feet of striking the big cross that the bishop of Quebec planted there, during a temperance picnic held a few years before by the clergy of his diocese.

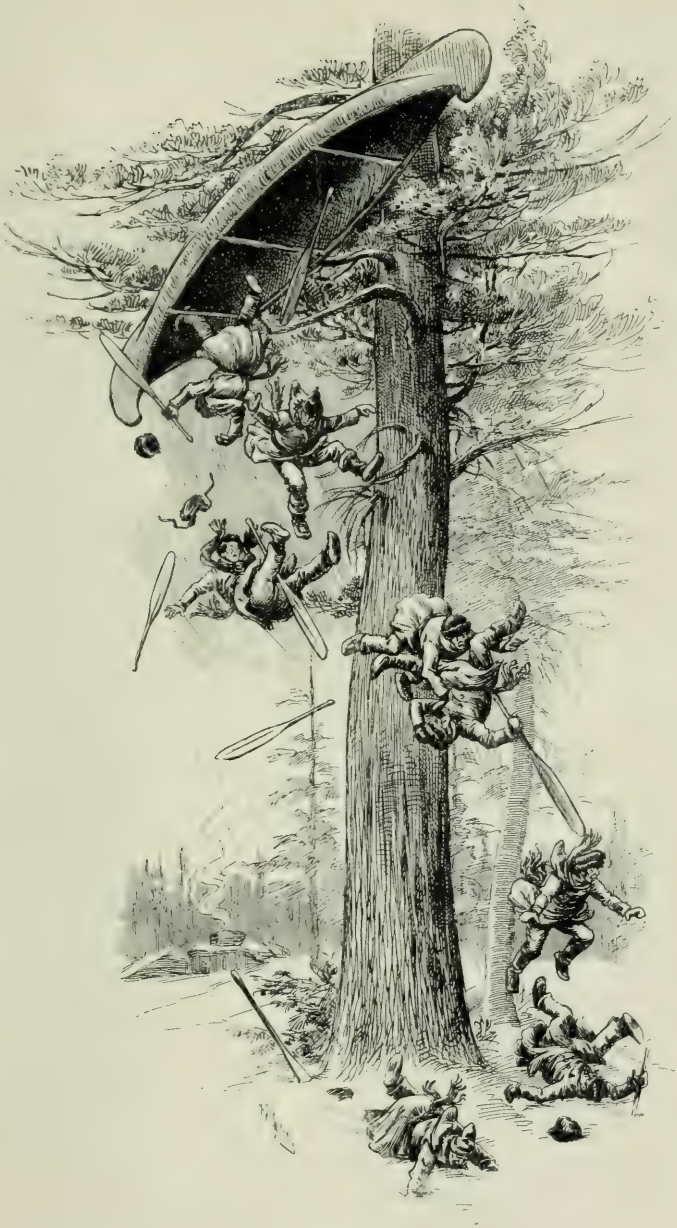
"'To the right, Baptiste! steer to the right, or else you will send us all to *le diable* if you keep on going that way.'

"And Baptiste did instinctively turn to the right, and we steered straight for the mountain of Montreal, which we could perceive in the distance by the dim lights of the city. I must say that I was becoming frightened, because if Baptiste kept on steering as he had done, we would never reach the Gatineau alive, and *le diable* was prob-

ably smacking his lips, as I supposed, at the bare idea of making a New Year's mess of us. And I can tell you that the disaster was not long in coming. While we were passing over the city, Baptiste Durand uttered a yell, and, flourishing his paddle over his head, gave it a twist that sent us plunging into a snowdrift, in a clearing on the mountain-side. Luckily the snow was soft, and none of us were hurt, nor was the the canoe injured in anyway. But Baptiste got out and declared most emphatically that he was going down-town to have *un verre*. We tried to reason with him, but our efforts proved useless, as is generally the case with *les ivrognes*. He would go down if *le diable* himself were to catch hold of him on the way. I held a moment's consultation with *mes camarades*, and before Baptiste knew what we were about, we had him down in the snow, where we bound him hand and foot so as to render him incapable of interfering with our movements. We placed him in the bottom of the canoe, and gagged him so as to prevent

him from speaking any words that might give us up to perdition. ❧ ❧ ❧

"And '*Acabris! Acabras! Acabram!*' up we went again, this time steering straight for the Gatineau. I had taken Baptiste's place in the stern. We had only a little over an hour to reach camp, and we all paddled away for dear life and eternal salvation. We followed the Ottawa River as far as the Pointe-Gatineau, and then steered due north by the polar star for our shanty. We were fairly flying in the air, and everything was going well when that rascal of a Baptiste managed to slip the ropes we had bound him with and to pull off his gag. We had been so busy paddling that, the first thing we knew, he was standing in the canoe, paddle in hand, and was swearing like a pagan. I felt that our end had come if he pronounced a certain sacred word, and it was out of the question to appease him in his frenzy. We had only a few miles to go to reach camp, and we were floating over the pine forest. The position was really terrible. Baptiste was using his paddle like a shillalah and making a *moulinet*



La dégringolade

that threatened every moment to crush in some one's head. I was so excited that by a false movement of my own paddle I let the canoe come down on a level with the pines, and it was upset as it struck the head of a big tree. We all fell out and began dropping down from branch to branch like partridges shot from the tamarack-tops. I don't know how long I was coming down, because I fainted before we reached the snow beneath, but my last recollection was like the dream of a man who feels himself dropping down a well without ever reaching bottom ❧ ❧ ❧

VII

"About eight o'clock the next morning, I awoke in my bunk, in the cabin, whither some of our *camarades* had conveyed us after having found us to our necks in a neighboring snow-bank, at the foot of a monster pine-tree ❧ Happily, no one was seriously hurt, although we were all more or less bruised and scratched, some having secured even black eyes in our way down from the tree-top ❧ We were all thankful

that nothing worse had befallen us, and when the *camarades* said that they had found us sleeping away in the snow the effects of the previous night's frolic, not one of us had anything to say to the contrary. We all felt satisfied that our *escapade* with Old Nick remained unknown in the camp, and we preferred leaving our chums under the impression that we had taken *un verre* too many, to telling them of the bargain we had made to satisfy a passing fancy. So far as Baptiste Durand was concerned, there is no doubt that he had forgotten the latter part of his voyage, but he never alluded to the fact, and we followed his example. It was not till many years afterward that I related the story of our *aventures*, just as they happened on that memorable New Year's eve. ❧ ❧ ❧

"All I can say, my friends, is that it is not so amusing as some people might think, to travel in mid-air, in the dead of winter, under the guidance of Beelzebub, running *la chasse-galerie*, and especially if you have *un ivrogne* to steer your bark canoe. Take my advice, and don't listen to any one who

would try to rope you in for such a trip. Wait until summer before you go to see your sweethearts, for it is better to run all the rapids of the Ottawa and the St. Lawrence on a raft, than to travel in partnership with *le diable* himself."

And Joe, the cook, dipped a ladleful of boiling molasses from the big kettle on the fire, and declared that everything was now ready for the candy-pull.

Fort Richelieu

THE WERWOLVES

A MOTLEY and picturesque-looking crowd had gathered within the walls of Fort Richelieu to attend the annual distribution of powder and lead, to take part in the winter drills and target practice, and to join in the Christmas festivities, that would last until the fast-approaching New Year.

Coureurs des bois from the Western country, scouts, hunters, trappers, militiamen, and *habitants* from the surrounding settlements, Indian warriors from the neighboring tribe of friendly Abenakis, were all placed under the military instruction of the company of regular marine infantry that

garrisoned the fort constructed in 1665, by M. de Saurel, at the mouth of the Richelieu River, where it flows into the waters of the St. Lawrence, forty-five miles below Montreal.

It was on Christmas eve of the year 1706, and the dreaded Iroquois were committing depredations in the surrounding country, burning farm-houses, stealing cattle and horses, and killing every man, woman, and child whom they could not carry away to their own villages to torture at the stake.

The Richelieu River was the natural highway to the Iroquois country during the open season, but now that its waters were ice-bound, it was hard to tell whence the attacks from those terrible savages could be expected.

The distribution of arms and ammunition having been made, under the joint supervision of the notary royal and the commandant of the fort, the men had retired to the barracks, where they were drinking, singing, and telling stories.

Tales of the most extraordinary adven-

tures were being unfolded by some of the hunters, who were vying with one another in their attempts at relating some unheard-of and fantastic incidents that would create a sensation among their superstitious and wonder-loving comrades.

A sharp lookout was kept outside on the bastions, where four sentries were pacing up and down, repeating every half-hour the familiar watch-cry:

"Sentinelle! prenez garde a vous!"

Old Sergeant Bellehumeur of the regulars, who had seen forty years of service in Canada, and who had come over with the regiment of Carignan-Salières, was quietly sitting in a corner of the guard-room, smooking his Indian calumet, and watching over and keeping order among the men who were inclined to become boisterous over the oft-repeated libations.

One of the men, who had accompanied La Salle in his first expedition in search of the mouths of the Mississippi, was in the act of reciting his adventures with the hostile tribes that they had met in that far-off country, when the crack of a musket was

heard from the outside, through the battlements. A second report immediately followed the first one, and the cry: "*Aux armes!*" was soon heard, with two more shots following close on each other.

The four sentries had evidently fired their muskets at some enemy or enemies, and the guard tumbled out in a hurry, followed by all the men, who had seized their arms, ready for an emergency.

The officer on duty was already on the spot when Sergeant Bellehumeur arrived to inquire into the cause of all this turmoil.

The sentry who had fired the first shot declared excitedly that all at once, on turning round on his beat, he had seen a party of red devils dancing around a bush fire, a couple of hundred yards away, right across the river from the fort, on the point covered with tall pine-trees. He had fired his musket in their direction, more with the intention of giving alarm than in the hope of hitting any of them at that distance.

The second, third, and fourth shots had been successively fired by the other sen-

tries, who had not seen anything of the Indians, but who had joined in the firing with the idea of calling the guard to the spot, and scaring away any enemy who might be prowling around.

"But where are the Indians now?" inquired the officer, who had climbed on the parapet, "and where is the fire of which you speak?"

"They seem to have disappeared as by enchantment, sir," answered the soldier, in astonishment; "but they were there a few moments ago, when I fired my musket at them."

"Well, we will see"; and, turning to Bellehumeur: "Sergeant, take ten men with you, and proceed over there cautiously, to see whether you can discover any signs of the presence of Indians on the point. Meanwhile, see to it that the guard is kept under arms until your return, to prevent any surprise."

Bellehumeur did as he was ordered, picking ten of his best men to accompany him. The gate of the fort was opened, and the drawbridge was lowered to give

passage to the party, who proceeded to cross the river, over the ice, marching at first in Indian file. When nearing the opposite shore, near the edge of the wood, the men were seen to scatter, and to advance carefully, taking advantage of every tree to protect themselves against a possible ambush. . .

The night was a bright one, and any dark object could be plainly seen on the white snow, in the clearing that surrounded the fort. . .

The men disappeared for a short time, but were soon seen again, coming back in the same order and by the same route. .

"Nothing, sir," said the sergeant, in saluting the officer. "Not a sign of fire of any kind, and not a single Indian track, in the snow, over the point." . .

"Well, that is curious, I declare! Had the sentry been drinking, sergeant, before going on post?" . .

"No more than the rest of the men, sir; and I could see no sign of liquor on him when the relief was sent out, an hour ago" . .

"Well, the man must be a fool or a poltroon to raise such an alarm without any cause whatever. See that he is immediately relieved from his post, sergeant, and have him confined in the guard-house until he appears before the commandant in the morning". . .

The sentry was duly relieved, and calm was restored among the garrison. The men went back to their quarters, and the conversation naturally fell on the peculiar circumstances that had just taken place.

II

An old weather-beaten trapper who had just returned from the Great Lakes volunteered the remark that, for his part, he was not so very sure that the sentry had not acted in perfect good faith, and had not been deceived by a band of *loups-garous*,—werwolves,—who came and went, appeared and disappeared, just as they pleased, under the protection of old Nick himself. . .

"I have seen them more than once in my travels," continued the trapper; "and only last year I had occasion to fire at just such

a band of miscreants, up on the Ottawa River, above the portage of the Grandes-Chaudières"

"Tell us about it!" chimed in the crowd of superstitious adventurers, whose credulous curiosity was instantly awakened by the promise of a story that would appeal to their love of the supernatural

And every one gathered about the old trapper, who was evidently proud to have the occasion to recite his exploits before as distinguished an assemblage of dare-devils as one could find anywhere, from Quebec to Michilimackinac

"We had left Lachine, twenty-four of us, in three war-canoes, bound for the Illinois country, by way of the Ottawa River and the Upper Lakes; and in four days we had reached the portage of the Grandes-Chaudières, where we rested for one day to renew our stock of meat, which was getting exhausted Along with one of my companions, I had followed some deer-tracks, which led us several miles up the river, and we soon succeeded in killing a splendid animal We divided the meat so

as to make it easier for us to carry, and it was getting on toward nightfall when we began to retrace our steps in the direction of the camp. Darkness overtook us on the way, and as we were heavily burdened, we had stopped to rest and to smoke a pipe in a clump of maple-trees on the edge of the river. All at once, and without warning of any kind, we saw a bright fire of balsam boughs burning on a small island in the middle of the river. Ten or twelve renegades, half human and half beasts, with heads and tails like wolves, arms, legs, and bodies like men, and eyes glaring like burning coals, were dancing around the fire, and barking a sort of outlandish chant that was now and then changed to peals of infernal laughter. We could also vaguely perceive, lying on the ground, the body of a human being that two of the imps were engaged in cutting up, probably getting it ready for the horrible meal that the miscreants would make when the dance would be over. Although we were sitting in the shadow of the trees, partly concealed by the underbrush, we were at once discov-

ered by the dancers, who beckoned to us to go and join them in their disgusting feast. That is the way they entrap unwary hunters for their bloody sacrifices. Our first impulse was to fly toward the woods; but we soon realized that we had to deal with *loups-garous*; and as we had both been to confession and taken holy communion before embarking at Lachine, we knew we had nothing to fear from them. While *loups-garous* are bad enough at any time, and you all know that only those who have remained seven years without performing their Easter duties are liable to be changed into wolves, condemned to prowl about at night until they are delivered by some Christian drawing blood from them by inflicting a wound on their forehead in the form of a cross, but we had to deal with Indian renegades, who had accepted the sacraments only in mockery, and who had never since performed any of the duties commaned by the Church. They are the worst *loups-garous* that one can meet, because they are constantly intent on capturing some misguided Christian, to drink his

blood and to eat his flesh in their horrible *fricots*. Had we been in possession of holy water to sprinkle at them, or of a four-leaved clover to make wadding for our muskets, we might have exterminated the whole crowd, after having cut crosses on the lead of our bullets. But we were powerless to interfere with them, knowing full well that ordinary ammunition was useless, and that bullets would flatten out on their tough and impenetrable hides. Wolves at night, those devils would assume again, during the day, their appearance of ordinary Indians; but their hide is only turned inside out, with the air growing inward. We were about to proceed on our way to the camp, leaving the *loups-garous* to continue their witchcraft unmolested, when a thought struck me that we might at least try to give them a couple of parting shots. We both withdrew the bullets from our muskets, cut crosses on them with our hunting-knives, placed them back in the barrels, along with two *dizaines* (a score) of beads from the blessed rosary which I carried in my pocket.

That would surely make the renegades sick, if it did not kill them outright. . .

"We took good aim, and fired together. Such unearthly howling and yelling I have never heard before or since. Whether we killed any of them I could not say; but the fire instantly disappeared, and the island was left in darkness, while the howls grew fainter and fainter as the *loups-garous* seemed to be scampering in the distance. We returned to camp, where our companions were beginning to be anxious about our safety. We found that one man, a hard character who bragged of his misdeeds, had disappeared during the day, and when we left on the following morning he had not yet returned to camp, neither did we ever hear of him afterward. In paddling up the river in our canoes we passed close to the island where we had seen the *loups-garous* the night before. We landed, and searched around for some time; but we could find no traces of fire, or any signs of the passage of werwolves or of any other animals. I knew that it would turned out just so, because it is a well-known fact that those accursed

brutes never leave any tracks behind them. My opinion was then, and has never changed to this day, that the man who strayed from our camp, and never returned, was captured by the *loups-garous* and was being eaten up by them when we disturbed their horrible feast"

"Well, is that all?" inquired Sergeant Bellehumeur, with an ill-concealed contempt

"Yes, that is all; but is it not enough to make one think that the sentry who has just been confined in the guard-house by the lieutenant for causing a false alarm has been deceived by a band of *loups-garous* who were picknicking on the point, and who disappeared in a twinkle when they found out that they were discovered?"

III

A murmur of assent greeted these last remarks of the speaker, and a number of *coureurs des bois* were ready to corroborate the absolute likelihood of his story by relating some of their own experiences with the *loups-garous*

One of them, however, in his dislike for anything connected with military discipline, ventured to add some offensive remarks for the young officer who had ordered the sentry to be placed in confinement.

"*Halte-la*" growled the sergeant. "The first one who dares insinuate anything contrary to the discipline, or show a want of respect for any of our officers, will be placed in the dungeon without further ado. Tell as many stories as you please, but as long as you are under my orders you will have to remember that you are not roaming at large in the wilderness, and that you are here in one of the forts of His Majesty the King of France".

This had the effect of producing an immediate silence, and the sergeant continued:

"I am not ready to gainsay the truthfulness of the story that has just been told, because I am myself inclined to believe in *loups-garous*, although I have never met one face to face; but I will not suffer any one to speak disrespectfully of my superior officers. I will however, if you desire it, tell you the experience of one of my old *copains*,

now dead and gone these many years, with a female *loup-garou*, who lived in the Iroquois village of Caughnawaga, near Montreal.

At the unanimous request of the crowd, the sergeant went on:

"Baptiste Tranchemontagne was a corporal with me, in the company of M. de Saurel, in the old regiment of Carignan-Salières. We had come from France together, and he and I made a pair in everything connected with the service, having fought side by side in many an encounter with the redskins. The poor fellow fell into the hands of the Iroquois at Cataracoui, and he was tortured at the stake in the village of the Mohawks. He died like a man, smiling when they tore the flesh from his body with red-hot tongs, and spitting in the faces of his tormentors when they approached him to cut off his lips and to pull out his eyes. May God have mercy on his brave soul!"

And the sergeant devoutly crossed himself.

"Baptiste, in one of our expeditions on

the south shore of Lake Ontario, had made the acquaintance of a young Indian maiden who was known as *La-linotte-qui-chante* among the warriors of her tribe. An intimacy sprang up between Baptiste and the young squaw, and they were married, Indian fashion, without much ceremony, the father's consent having been obtained by the gift of an old musket. The girl followed us back, and joined the tribe that had settled at Caughnawaga, under the protection of the guns of Fort St. Louis, opposite Lachine, where our company was stationed for nearly a whole year. Everything went well as long as we remained at Fort St. Louis, although, Indian-like, the young squaw was fearfully jealous of Baptiste, and at times would threaten him with acts of direful vengeance if he ever became unfaithful to her. . . .

"One day our command was ordered to Fort St. Frédéric, on Lake Champlain, and our captain gave the strictest order that no camp-follower of any kind, men, women, or children, should be allowed to accompany us in the expedition. We started in the

middle of the night, and Baptiste hurriedly said good-by to his Indian wife, telling her that he would return to see her in a short time. The squaw answered sulkily that she would follow him anywhere, and that, in spite of the captain or any one else, she would reach the fort before we did. We knew the Indian character too well to doubt that she would do as she promised, and when we marched over the drawbridge of Fort St. Frédéric, five days afterward, we were not too much astonished to see, among the throng of Indians who had gathered to see us arrive, the face of Baptiste's squaw, half concealed under her blanket. Baptiste was slightly annoyed at her presence, because he feared that the officers might think that, contrary to orders, he had encouraged her to follow the company. But we had no time to reflect on the situation before our company was ordered to embark in canoes, to proceed at once to Lake St. Sacrament (now Lake George). Baptiste did not even have the chance to speak to his squaw before we got under way, with three more companies of our regiment, under the com-

mand of Colonel de Ramezay. We were away for three months, engaged in an expedition against the Mohawks; and we gave the red devils such a thrashing that they pleaded for peace, and we returned victorious to enjoy a few weeks of well-earned repose in the garrison of Montreal. Baptiste had lost sight of *La-linotte-qui-chante*, and he supposed that she had either returned to her tribe or else formed new ties with some of the trappers who regularly visited the forts to sell their furs and squander the proceeds in riotous living. . . .

"The Indians having buried the tomahawk, there came a period of peace, when the governor-general at Quebec offered a grant of land to any soldier who would quit the regular service, and a dowry of eighty pistoles in money to any woman, provided that they got married and settled in the country. I never had any taste for wedded life or for the career of a *pekin*, but Baptiste was not slow in casting his eyes upon a pretty girl who lived at Laprairie across the river from Montreal. He told me confidentially that he had made up his mind to

leave the service and to profit by the liberal offers of the government. I attempted to dissuade him from his project, because I hated to part with my best friend; but he was smitten, and I had to make up my mind to bow to the inevitable when strange and unexpected occurrences soon took place that upset all his plans. One day, when we were both lounging about the market-place, Baptiste suddenly found himself face to face with *La-linotte-qui-chante*, whom he had last seen some six months before at Fort St. Frédéric. To say that he felt embarrassed would be putting it very mildly; but he assumed a bold countenance, and spoke words of welcome that were received with apparent indifference by the Indian girl. She had returned to Caughnawaga, where she was now living, and she had come to Montreal with some Indian hunters who had brought their furs to market. She spoke not a word, but looked reproachfully at her old lover with her piercing black eyes, and disappeared in the crowd. Baptiste was seriously annoyed at this unexpected meeting, but as the girl had left without uttering any re-

proaches, he took it for granted that she had become reconciled to the idea of a final separation between them. My chum had applied for his discharge, and was to be married on the coming Easter Monday, and, as a matter of course, I was to act as his best man — his *garcon d'honneur*. Preparations were being made for the wedding, and there was hardly a day that Baptiste did not cross over the river to go and see his fiancée. Ten days before the date appointed for the ceremony, Baptiste returned one night in great trouble. His intended had been taken ill, seriously ill, with a violent fever, and no one at Laprairie seemed to understand the nature of her sickness. He would ask the post surgeon to go and see her in the morning. And besides, on leaving Laprairie, that very night, he had met *La-linotte-qui-chante* at the cross-road that led to Caughnawaga. No words had been exchanged between them, but her presence there at such a time was sufficient to give him food for presages of no pleasant nature. Accompanied by the surgeon, he repaired to Laprairie on the following morn-

ing, and he was horrified to learn that his fiancée had been stricken down with the smallpox, that was then raging among our Indian allies encamped about Fort St. Louis. Baptiste insisted at once that he should nurse his sweetheart through her dangerous illness, and the doctor returned to Montreal after having prescribed the necessary treatment. It was useless, however, for five days later my friend returned to Montreal with the sad news that his fiancée was dead. The poor fellow, in despair, reinlisted at once in our company, and declared that he would end his life in the ranks. He then took me aside and related to me the following incidents that had occurred on the night before the death of his betrothed. During the day he had been astonished, on entering the large family living-room, to find *La-linotte-qui-chante* sitting by the fireplace, as the Indians are wont to do, coming and going oftentime without asking permission of any kind from the inmates, and even without speaking a single word. Suspicious of her presence at such a place and under such circumstances, he immediately

went to her and asked her what she was doing there. . .

"'I have come to offer you help in your trouble and consolation in your sorrow. The white maiden whom you love so much will be dead before morning, if I do not come to the rescue. I will go back to Caughnawaga, and ask for a potion that will cure her, from our medicine-man. Meet me to-night, at twelve o'clock, at the first turn of the road, among the pine trees on the river-side.'

"And before Baptiste could answer she had left the house, going in the direction of the Indian village. Although he did not half like the mysterious ways of the squaw, Baptiste said to himself that no harm could come of trying the decoction as a last resort, because the dreadful disease had made such progress that it was evident that his sweet-heart was likely to die at any moment.

"Shortly before midnight Baptiste took his musket and went out to the rendez-vous. He had been waiting for some time, and was getting impatient, when he heard a noise behind him, and in turning round

The Delivrance

perceived a pair of eyes glaring at him from a small distance in the underbrush. It could not be the squaw, and he supposed that it was some wild animal prowling about, probably a bear, a wolf, or a wild-cat. He instinctively shouldered his musket, and although he could not take a good aim in the dark, he fired, missing the beast, who sprang at him with a terrible growl.

"It was a wolf of enormous size, and for the first time Baptiste thought of a *loup-garou*. He was too well accustomed to danger to lose his presence of mind, and throwing his empty musket in the snow, he seized his hunting-knife, and made a lunge at the beast; but the blade bent on the hide of the animal as if it had been thrust into a side of sole-leather. Baptiste now bethought himself of the only way of getting at the wolf, by drawing its blood in cutting a cross in its forehead. The wolf seemed to realize the fact, and fought at paw's length with its powerful claws, tearing Baptiste's flesh into shreds, and trying to strike at his face so as to blind him, if possible, while keeping its own head out of the reach of the gleaming

knife. The fight had lasted for some time, and Baptiste was getting exhausted, when by an adroit stroke of his weapon, always as sharp as a razor, he completely cut off one of the fore paws of the animal, who uttered a terrible yell resembling the scream of a woman, and fled through the woods, where it disappeared in an instant. . .

"Baptiste now understood the situation in a moment. *La-linotte-qui-chante,* who had been baptized and duly received in our holy religion, having afterward relapsed into idolatry, had been turned into a *loup-garou,* condemned to roam by night, while keeping her usual apparance during the day. Jealousy and revenge had induced her to attack her former lover, hoping to take him unawares, and to kill him in the woods, while his new love was lying on her death-bed, a victim to the terrible scourge that the squaw had brought to the house. Baptiste learned that *La-linotte-qui-chante* had been a frequent visitor for some time past, having succeed in ingratiating herself with the poor dead girl, undoubtedly bringing to her the germ of the disease that was raging at the

Indian village. Such was the savage revenge of the young squaw to punish the faithlessness of Baptiste to his former vows of love and affection. It was also learned afterward that a human arm, evidently that of an Indian woman, had been found in the snow by some children who had strayed in the woods, at the very spot where the fight had taken place between Baptiste and the *loup-garou*. It was undoubtedly the fore paw of the wolf, which had resumed its former shape as the arm of the renegade squaw. . .

"I have already told you," continued Sergeant Bellehumeur, "that poor Baptiste was later on taken prisoner by the Iroquois at Cataracoui, and that he was burned at the stake by the Mohawks. One of the prisoners who escaped from the redskins, and returned to Montreal, told me that he had remarked a one-armed squaw, who seemed to take special pleasure in inventing the most abominable devices to add to the sufferings of poor Baptiste. It was she who pulled out his tongue by the root, and who

crushed in his skull with a tomahawk when he fainted from pain and loss of blood.

"Now," summed up the sergeant, so as to cut short any more story-telling, "this is a real *loup-garou* story that I can vouch for, and that I would not permit any one to gainsay; and I now would call your attention to the fact that I will order the *couvre-feu* to be sounded, and that I shall expect every one of you to be snoring at the bugle-call, so as to observe the rules of this garrison.

"Lights out! and silence in the barracks!"

Lights Out!

LA QUÊTE DE L'ENFANT JÉSUS

Il est né le divin Enfant,
Jouez hautbois ! Résonnez musette !
Il est né le divin Enfant,
Chantons tous son avènement.

(*Old French Noel.*)

I

WHEN Fanfan Dalcour received a message from *M'sieu le Curé* of Lanoraie, asking him to call at the *presbytère* on the following Sunday, after Vespers, he hardly knew what to say, and hesitated for a moment or two before lifting his eyes towards the beadle, who stood waiting for an answer :

" Well, tell *M'sieu le Curé* that I will go : " and after another pause : " that's all "

" *Bonjour, M'sieu Fanfan* "

" *Au revoir, père Landry !* "

Fanfan Dalcour was a robust and handsome young farmer, who had lately returned

from the North-west country, where he had been hunting and trapping among the Indians and Half-breeds on the head waters of the Saskatchewan River.

His sudden departure from home, some two years before, had been connected with a scandal in the rural parish of Lanoraie, and since his return he had not yet been to pay his respects to the venerable old priest who had baptized him twenty years before.

Fanfan was sulking, and even appeared inclined to forego his allegiance to his old parish church. Instead of accompanying his father and mother to the church at Lanoraie, as he was wont to do with pride in the days of his boyhood, he had always, since his return, started alone, before the others, to go to the neighbouring village of Lavaltrie to perform his Sunday devotions. And that, much to the chagrin and disappointment of the old *curé*, who had always taken great interest in him, and who, probably, wanted to give him a bit of pastoral advice.

There was no way of avoiding the meeting since he had formally promised to go,

and Fanfan began at once to build up a defensive argument against the reproaches that he thought would surely fall upon his guilty head. ❧ ❧ ❧

La Quête de l'Enfant Jésus

II

Fanfan Dalcour, from his earliest boyhood, had always been considered as a *protégé* of *M'sieu le Curé*, and specially so, when at the age of ten he became an *enfant de choeur*, with a black soutanelle and a little daintily plaited white muslin surplice that M'amselle Marguerite, the *curé's* housekeeper, had made expressly for him. ❧ He had then learned his catechism and made his first communion, and had soon become noted as the favorite altar boy who could most prettily make a bow and a genuflection, and most carefully pour the wine out of the *burettes* for the holy sacrifice of the the mass. ❧ ❧ ❧

His father, Pierriche Dalcour, who was a well-to-do *habitant*, took great pride in the accomplishments of his son, and his heart fairly thumped with delight when, one evening at the service of the *Mois de*

Marie, he recognized the voice of Fanfan leading the first verse of a sacred song to the Virgin :

> Salut ! O vierge immaculée !
> Brillante étoile du matin.

And Fanfan had also become the smartest pupil of the old village schoolmaster, and it had even been rumoured that he had begun to study Latin with the intention of going to college to become a priest, a lawyer, a doctor or a notary. But that was only idle talk, and old Pierriche Dalcour declared that he wanted his first-born to stay at home to till the farm as he and his father and his fore-fathers had done for two hundred years before him, on the banks of the St. Lawrence. And that suited Fanfan's inclinations. He loved to rise with the lark in summer, and to work in the broad fields with the farm hands. In the evening he enjoyed boating and swimming in the waters of the big river that flowed lazily and majestically past his father's old homestead. He would shoot ducks and wild geese as they passed every spring and autumn in their regular migrations, and in winter time he loved to

speed his horse on the polished surface of the ice-bound river. Fanfan had grown to be a strong, active lad who took the lead in all the sports of the parish, but as he reached manhood he remained faithful in his attendance at church, and in his gratitude for the unbounded kindness of *M'sieu le Curé*.

La Quête de l'Enfant Jesus

He had also become the leading singer in the church choir, and the whole congregation was proud of his deep, powerful voice when he led the *Kyrie Eleison*, the *Gloria in excelsis*, the *Credo* or the *Sanctus*.

III

The old secular parish church of Lanoraie had ever been without an organ, and it was an eventful Sunday when *M'sieu le Curé* announced from the pulpit that, after due consultation with *ces messieurs du banc-d'oeuvre*,* he had come to the conclusion of purchasing an instrument in Montreal, and that it would be put up in the *jubé*, during the following week, in time for the approaching Christmas celebration.

* Literally "those gentlemen of the work bench". The expression is popularly used in French Canadian churches to designate the Board of Churchwardens.

The daughter of the village trader, Juliette Leblanc, who had just completed her studies at the convent of Berthier, had volunteered her services as organist gratuitously, for the first year.

This naturally brought Fanfan Dalcourt in contact with Juliette Leblanc, who was a pretty girl just budding into womanhood. And the usual result followed. *La vieille, vieille histoire* was repeated.

A few rehearsals became necessary before the inauguration of the organ, which would take place on the occasion of the midnight mass on Christmas Eve, and Fanfan and Juliette, who had merely known each other by sight from childhood, were now brought together almost every day for the purpose of choral practice and service organization.

Juliette Leblanc, who was naturally endowed with musical talents, had received a fairly good training from her teachers at school, and with much patience and a few days' hard work, she succeeded in preparing a *Messe Bordelaise* that was sure to create a sensation among the music-loving population of a French-Canadian parish.

Fanfan now assumed the duties of *maître-chantre* in the choir, and naturally took great pride in his new position.

La Quête de l'Enfant Jésus

Every thing was in readiness for *la messe de minuit*, and the church had been elaborately decorated and illuminated for the occasion. When the last stroke of the bell had finished tolling the midnight hour, every pew was filled with a pious and expectant congregation. A soft prelude was heard, and every one instinctively held breath to listen to Fanfan's voice, accompanied by the swelling chords of the organ, in the ancient canticle announcing the coming of the Messiah:

> Ça, bergers, assemblons-nous :
> Allons voir le Messie.
> Cherchons cet enfant si doux
> Dans les bras de Marie.
> Je l'entends, il nous appelle tous,
> O sort digne d'envie !

M'sieu le Curé, who was putting on his sacred vestments in the *sacristie*, stopped and wept like a child and declared that his *musique* was sweeter than any thing he had ever heard in the cathedral of Notre Dame, in Montreal.

The old choral service was indeed a success, as well as the rendering of the ancient *Noels*, sacred echoes of distant France, that had, from time immemorial, been sung in the old church during the Christmas festivities.

And when the service was over, the old priest in a simple allocution related the incidents of the birth of the Infant Saviour, and the whole congregation joined with him in a sacred song of exaltation :

Nouvelle agréable !
Un Sauveur enfant nous est né.
C'est dans une étable,
Qu'il nous est donné.

At the *réveillon* that followed the midnight mass, at the residence of Jean-Jean Leblanc, Juliette and Fanfan were congratulated and toasted on the success that they had achieved in so short a time of practice.

And the old people, in returning home that night, declared that such a talented young man and such a pretty girl who could so well sing and play together, would naturally fall in love with each other and

that there certainly was a new *mariage à l'horizon.*

The prediction was soon realized, for at the New Year's gatherings, it became a matter of public gossip that Fanfan and Juliette were *fiancés* and that they were to be married *aux jours gras,* at carnival time. Both families were respectable and well to do, and it was universally acknowledged that it was a *mariage de bon sens* as well as a *mariage d'amour.*

The old priest was all smiles when he heard the news, and he sent for Fanfan and Juliette to tell them of the gladness of his heart and to give them his blessing in anticipation of the marriage ceremony.

His *protégé* and master-singer wedded to his organist !—what a boon for the church and what a happy realization of his own dreams !

But "he that reckons without his host must reckon twice," says an old French proverb, and *M'sieu le Curé* had not reckoned with "politics," when he had considered the future organization of his choir

as settled beyond paradventure by the marriage of Fanfan and Juliette.

IV

Early in January, the news came that an election to choose a member of Parliament for the county of Berthier would take place on the first day of the following month, to replace the old member, who had been called to the Senate.

And with the new election came a host of stump speakers and district canvassers from Montreal, with the usual accompaniment of committee-meetings and other evils inseparable from the free and untrammelled judgment of the people on such occasions.

The parish soon became infested with a spirit of acrimonious discussion that oftentimes degenerated into enmity and quarrels among the younger voters.

Old Pierriche Dalcour was an outspoken liberal, *un rouge*, and Jean-Jean Leblanc always voted with *les bleus*, the conservatives. Fanfan, as a matter of course, followed his father's political proclivities, but on the other hand, it is hardly necessary to

state that Juliette knew nothing of party preferences and intrigues, and that she was absolutely indifferent to the burning topics that were discussed around her. She was all wrapped up in Fanfan's love, and was awaiting with delight the hour when she would become his wife. . . .

Not so with the old folks, who generally became quite excited when, once in four years, they were called to vote against each other's favorite candidate. . . .

Pierriche Dalcour had said to Fanfan :

"Until after election, you had better be on your guard, when you go to see Juliette, You know that her father's house is looked upon as the headquarters of the conservatives, and that it is always filled with canvassers and speakers from the city. They might think it to their advantage to say that you have joined the *bleus* and use your name in connection with their party. My father fought at St. Denis, under Papineau, and I would not have it said . for all the world that one of us has gone back on the party". . .

"Never fear, father," answered Fanfan,

smiling. "Juliette and I never talk 'politics' and I shall be very careful with the others."

V

There was to be a grand rally of the voters on the following Sunday afternoon, after Vespers, when speakers of both parties were to meet at the church door to discuss public matters.

Two young advocates from Montreal had already arrived and were the guests of Jean-Jean Leblanc. One of them had even offered to join the church choir for the occasion. As he was known as a singer of considerable repute in the great city, the offer was thankfully accepted by Fanfan, and at High Mass, the congregation were delighted to hear a stranger sing an *Ave Maria* in a clear, cultivated tenor voice. It was even acknowledged, after the service, that the young man from the city could sing *almost* as well as Fanfan Dalcour.

Fanfan himself had been the first to offer his congratulations as he was leaving the church to go and take his dinner with

M' sieu le Curé, as he had been in the habit of doing, every Sunday, for many years past.

The repast over, and after a few moment's conversation with the priest, Fanfan lighted his pipe and walked leisurely towards Jean-Jean Leblanc's, to have a chat with his comrades, before Vespers. The house was full of people and when he entered it he heard the voice of his new acquaintance, the tenor, rehearsing a *Magnificat*, with piano accompaniment, in the sitting-room, up stairs. The men down stairs were discussing the political situation, and one of them, at the sight of Fanfan, said tauntingly :

"Look out, Fanfan, *mon garçon !* The Conservatives are going to defeat you in this election, and if you are not very careful the young advocate, up there, after disputing your laurels as a singer, will also beat you out of your sweetheart. Don't you hear them warble together ?"

A peal of laughter greeted these remarks, because, politically, Fanfan found himself alone among his opponents, at this particular

moment. He felt somewhat embarrassed and he hardly knew whether to laugh or to be vexed, but he passed on without answering. With his accustomed familiarity he walked up stairs, where the women had been listening to the music that had just stopped. . . .

Juliette Leblanc was sitting at the piano with her back turned to the door, and the young advocate, with the assumed freedom of an old acquaintance, was just bending over her and whispering in her ears words that made the young girl laugh and blush at the same time. And then, raising his voice so that he could be heard by every one in the room: . . .

"I have been told, Mademoiselle Juliette, that you are engaged to be married to the *Maître-chantre* of your choir, an obstinate liberal who surely does not deserve such a prize, the prettiest girl of conservative parentage in the parish". . . .

"But *Monsieur!* pleaded the girl.

"Well, *Mademoiselle,* I am sorry to see it, and were it not for the fact that I am probably too late, I would myself——!"

"What would you do yourself *Monsieur le godelureau ?*" interrupted Fanfan, taking a step forward toward the speaker, who was somewhat nonplussed at his appearance, but who prided himself as a politician, in never being taken by surprise.

"I would enter the field against you, Monsieur Fanfan, and with a little patience, I think I would be as sure of winning the contest against you as we are of beating you and your friends in the coming election".

This was said with an air of conceit and sarcasm that put Fanfan fairly beside himself.

Poor Juliette saw that a quarrel was imminent, and she got up pale and trembling, and attempted to interpose herself between the two men. But before she had time to act, Fanfan had stepped up to the young politician and with glaring eyes and clenched fits :—

"You are both a braggart and a *mal-appris, M'sieu l'avocat !* to act and speak as you have done. And if it were not for the respect I have for the ladies here present, and for the house of Mr. Leblanc,

I would give you a thrashing that would take the conceit out of you before you return to Montreal"

The advocate turned pale, but did not lose his self-control. With a constrained smile :—

"Oh, you are also a village bully, Monsieur Fanfan, but need I tell you that such as I are not afraid of such as you"

The words were hardly out of his mouth before Fanfan had caught him by the throat, and heedless of the shrieks of the women present, and before any one could interfere, he lifted him from his feet, carried him towards the door at the head of the stairs and flung him down among the crowd below.

All this had happened so quickly that Fanfan had time to run down stairs himself and to make his way out of the house before the people knew what it was all about.

Juliette had fainted upstairs and could not answer the inquiries of her father, who had come to see what was the trouble, and it took fully ten minutes before the circumstances were explained.

The lawyer was not seriously hurt, although badly shaken up, but the scandal was great. The news spread like wildfire among the crowd that were now wending their way toward the church to attend the afternoon service. . .

The psalms and the hymns, at Vespers, that afternoon, were chanted without the organ accompaniment, and the old *curé* who inquired the cause, was told that Mam'selle Juliette had suddenly been taken sick and that there was no one to replace her. .

"But where is Fanfan Dalcour?" continued the pastor. . .

No one seemed to know, or cared to tell him the news. . .

Fanfan, on coming out of the house of Jean-Jean Leblanc, had driven home at full speed, and had told to his father about what had just taken place. . .

"*Oh! les bleus! les bleus!* the rascals! Did I not tell you to look out for them! You did right, Fanfan, to resent the insult of that young coxcomb. But what are you going to do now?

"Do? I don't know, but I suppose that

the best thing that the lawyer can do himself is to have me arrested for assault, and put in jail, but I won't give him the chance to do that. I will keep away from home for some time to let the thing blow over. Anyhow, my engagement with Juliette is at an end, and I don't care what I do now. What, if I go to Manitoba to see uncle Thomas, who lives at St. Boniface ? He has often written to us inviting me to go. Now is the time ; I can leave for Montreal by the next train and escape the vengeance which that pettifogger of a lawyer will surely try to take on me."

"Well, I suppose it is the best thing that you can do under the circumstances. Get your things ready, and I will drive you to the station. I will write soon to let you know the effects of your escapade."

And Fanfan had disappeared from Lanoraie without giving any explanations to the *curé* or to his *fiancée*.

Poor Juliette Leblanc had been ill for some time after Fanfan's departure and it had been fully three months before she had resumed her place at the organ.

She had never spoken about Fanfan, had never even pronounced his name, but she was known to have said that "politics" were not only delusive, but they were also mendacious and pitiless. She never would permit any one to allude to the trouble between her lover and the Montreal politician, and when the young man had called to say good-by before leaving Lanoraie, she had refused to see him. ❧ ❧ ❧

The old *curé* had called to comfort her, and she had resigned herself to a state of apparent indifference that puzzled her father. Fully half-a-dozen offers of marriage had since been made to her, but she had refused every one, declaring that she would not marry. That was all. ❧ ❧ ❧

VI

Such were the causes of Fanfan Dalcour's trip to the North-West country, whence he had lately returned after a two years' absence, when the *Curé* of Lanoraie had sent him that message, to ask his presence at the *presbytère* on the following Sunday, after Vespers. ❧ ❧ ❧

Fanfan kept his own counsel until the appointed hour, when he simply said to his old mother :—

"I am going to harness up to pay a visit to *M'sieu le Curé*. I will return for supper."

And he went, wondering what reception the good old *curé* would give him; because, apart from the scandal his departure had caused, the church choir had been very badly disorganized by his absence. . . .

When Fanfan drove up to the *presbytère*, he found the old priest awaiting him alone in his reception room. He embraced him affectionately, asked him about the most important events that had taken place during his journey, but never alluded to the cause of his sudden departure for the North-West. . . .

"Now that you are back among your friends, I hope to see you take your place in the parish among your old comrades. Meanwhile, I desire you to accompany me next week for *la quête de l'enfant Jésus*.

Fanfan was deeply moved by the kindness of his old pastor, and could not refuse

Starting for the Christmas Collection

his request, although he dreaded the ordeal of facing every household in the parish.

La Quête de l'Enfant Jesus

La quête de l'Enfant Jésus,—" the collection for the Infant Jesus,"—is an annual visit made in every French parish in Canada, for the purpose of gathering candles for the illumination of the church at the Christmas midnight mass. The women also contribute bits of lace, and ribbons, and artificial flowers, for decoration of the holy manger, where a scene representing the birth of the infant Saviour is exposed for the veneration of the faithful.

The parish priest makes that his annual call, and is usually accompanied by the *marguiller en charge*, the oldest among the church-wardens *M' sieu le Curé*, in his fatherly affection for Fanfan, had selected him this year, for the purpose of facilitating his first meeting, since his return, with all the parishioners, who would be sure to welcome him cordially on such an errand, and especially in such company.

The following Monday, Fanfan harnessed his favorite horse to his best sleigh, and at the hour appointed, 9 o'clock in the morn-

ing, knocked at the door of the *presbytère*, where *M'sieu le Curé* was already waiting for him. The collection having been announced in the pulpit the day before, every one was on the alert to welcome the visitors, who stopped at every house as they proceeded on their way. Fanfan was thus brought in contact with every family, until he stopped his horse at the door of the residence of Jean-Jean Leblanc. Here, he hesitated a moment before following his old friend, who led the way. The *curé*, who had expected as much, came to the rescue :

" Come Fanfan, you cant stop now that you have come so far. *Courage, mon ami !*

And while speaking, the priest had already knocked at the door, and before Fanfan had time to reply, Jean-Jean Leblanc stood on the threshold :

" Welcome, *M'sieu le Curé ;* do me the honor to walk in ". . .

And perceiving Fanfan, who held back, pretending to be busy with his horse :—

" *Bonjour,* Fanfan ! come in, *mon ami.* Happy to see you. Come in, come in ! ".

And he walked down the steps, and ex-

tended his hand in such a cordial manner that Fanfan could not help accepting it as heartily as it was offered.

The visit was necessarily a short one, but the ice was broken, and when Jean-Jean Leblanc had contributed his donation :—

"My wife and Juliette are away at Berthier, but they will return to-morrow, to be on hand to help in decorating the church for the midnight mass. Come and see us, Fanfan. I know the ladies will be happy to meet you. *Bonjour M'sieu le Curé! Bonjour Fanfan!* give my regards to your father and mother, and bring them along with you when you return this way."

And late in the evening, after the visits had all been made, and when the priest had insisted that Fanfan should take his supper with him before returning home : —

"We have done a good day's work, have we not Fanfan? The collection has been a large one, and our old church will look beautiful at the midnight mass. What kind, generous souls we have in our parish! And then the day has not been a bad one for you, Fanfan. You have met all your

old friends and acquaintances after a prolonged absence, and I only need your promise that you will take your place in the choir, now. The people will be so happy to hear you."

"I will *M'sieu le Curé*, and I hardly know how to express my thanks for your kind offices in arranging my reconciliation with so many persons that I had offended by my childish display of anger two years ago. It will be a lesson to me, and you can rest assured that I watch over my temper in the future."

"Well, well!" interrupted the old priest, "let bygones be bygones, and let us see that we take good care of the present."

When Fanfan went home that night it had been arranged that he would bring a load of pine boughs and evergreens sometime during the week, and that he would help the beadle to put up and decorate the old-fashioned branch chandeliers that were always used to light up the church during the Christmas festivities.

Old Pierriche Dalcour, when he was told of what had happened, was delighted to

hear the good news. The absence of his son, for two long years, had appeased his resentment, and he declared that, for his part, he would be the first, under the circumstances, to go and offer his hand to Jean-Jean Leblanc, and that no later than the following Sunday, when he went to church.

La Quête de l'Enfant Jesus

Christmas was now fast approaching, and the young girls were busy with the church decorations. One of the lateral chapels had been converted into a bower of verdure, where could be seen a representation of the interior of a stable. According to custom, a dainty wax figure of the Infant Saviour would be laid upon the straw of the holy manger, during the celebration of the midnight Mass. . .

Fanfan Dalcour, in fulfilment of his promise, had brought a load of green boughs and had unloaded them at the church door. Taking an armful of the fragrant greens, he walked into the temple, looking for a place where he could deposit them, when he suddenly found himself face to face with Juliette Leblanc, who was perched upon a step

ladder, arranging some draperies above the *crèche*.

They had both been looking forward to an early meeting, but neither of them had dreamed that it would be brought about in such an embarrassing manner. They stood for a moment staring at each other, being quite incapable of making a move, or saying a word that would relieve the awkwardness of the situation.

Happily for them, *M'sieu le Curé* was in the chancel at the same time supervising the ornamentation of the great altar, and the noise made by Fanfan in entering the church had attracted his attention.

The good old pastor took in the situation at a glance, and came to the rescue.

"That's right, Fanfan, drop those branches just where you are. Mademoiselle Juliette needs them to complete her decorations".

And with a twinkle, full of engaging kindness, in his merry eye :—

"Come down, Juliette, from the ladder, and let Fanfan help you to do that part of the work, while I return to my altar. And

Going to Midnight Mass

do not forget that the members of your choir will soon be here for practice."

And *M'sieu le Curé* went away, leaving the young couple together to heal the breach that had caused a separation of two long years.

Few words were spoken, and scarcely any allusions were made to the misunderstanding that had estranged them from one another.

"Will you forgive me, Juliette? said Fanfan, simply, in taking a hand that she did not attempt to withdraw.

"I was probably as indiscreet as you were hasty. Let us forget the past," ingenuously answered the young girl.

And the conversation turned on the incidents of Fanfan's journey and his life among the Indians and Half-breeds. When the priest returned, half an hour later, he found his young friends quietly conversing together.

"Now, Fanfan, with the permission of Mademoiselle Juliette, I expect you to take your place as leader of our choir for the coming midnight Mass, and I think that

you might take this occasion to have a little practice together. What say you, Juliette?"

A votre service, M'sieu le Curé. I am entirely at your disposal."

And the reconciliation was sealed by Fanfan and Juliette going to the organ and singing together the old Christmas song of joy and praise :—

Les anges dans nos campagnes,
Ont entonné l'hymme des cieux ;
Et l'écho de nos montagnes
Redit ce chant mélodieux
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

VII

Among the public announcements that were made from the pulpit by the pastor at the Christmas midnight service, was the following :—

"I call the banns of marriage between François Dalcour, minor son, born of the sacred wedlock of Pierre Dalcour and Madeleine Hervieu, of the first part; and Juliette Leblanc, minor daughter, born of the sacred wedlock of Jean-Jean Leblanc and Angélique Lafontaine, of the second part. First and last banns. The marriage will be

celebrated on the second day of January next, at the parish church of Lanoraie, at 9 o'clock in the morning."

La Quête de l'Enfant Jésus

And again at the *réveillon* that followed the Mass, the *fiancés* were toasted and congratulated by their friends, and Jean-Jean Leblanc and Pierriche Dalcour united their voices in the solemn declaration that no "politics," could interfere this time with the happiness of their children.

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